

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE

March 2, 1963

SUBJECT: Withdrawal of Soviet Forces from Cuba

QUESTION: To what degree have the Soviets met their commitment for withdrawal of "several thousand" by mid-March?

- a) Do we know the types of troops withdrawn?
- b) To what degree have elements of the four reinforced armored battalions been withdrawn?
- c) What plans have we to effect the withdrawal of other forces?
- d) Is our ultimate goal the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from the island? How is this to be accomplished?
- e) What assurances have we that as forces are gradually being withdrawn, other forces are not being introduced into Cuba?
- f) What action are we prepared to take in the event of such introduction of other forces in significant numbers?

CURRENT SITUATION REPORT:

(Intelligence community facts to be presented by INR)

President Kennedy was asked in his news conference March 6 whether he had any accurate information of the number of Soviet troops removed from Cuba, was he satisfied with the rate of withdrawal, and had the Russians offered any provision for verification of the withdrawal. "No," the President replied, "The answer to your question would really be 'no' to all of them."

Secretary Rusk in his news conference of March 8 said that ships had been moving into and out of Cuba in the past two weeks but that he did not want to "get into the box score of running figures on how the situation stands at this moment."

Secretary Rusk, speaking extemporaneously before the Conference for the Advertising Council on March 12, suggested a more complete report on movement of Soviet troops some time after the middle of the month, "because of the recent indication from the Soviet Union that they were taking out several thousand of them before the end of the month."

No official count of the Soviet troop withdrawals has been provided to the public since the White House announcement, on February 21, of the promised Soviet withdrawal of "several thousand Soviet troops" from Cuba by March 15.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

- a) It is clear that some of the Soviet forces have been moved out of Cuba, but we are not able to be precise about how many troops and what types of troops have been withdrawn.
- b) We don't know the degree to which elements of the four reinforced armored battalions have been withdrawn.
- c & d) As to how we will bring about the withdrawal of other forces, we intend to carry on with our efforts to see that this is done. Our ultimate goal is the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from the island. To bring this about we are prepared to take all the actions that can reasonably be taken under all the circumstances.
- e) As to what assurances we have that other Soviet forces are not being introduced into Cuba -- we continue our surveillance and this and our other sources of intelligence have not indicated any significant inflow of Soviet personnel. We have made it abundantly clear that continuing presence of Soviet forces in this hemisphere is not acceptable. We believe that the Soviet Union will find it in its national self-interest to continue to withdraw military personnel.
- f) As for what action we would take in the event of the introduction of other Soviet forces in significant numbers, should that situation ever arise, we will know how to deal with it.